

Form-Based Code

An overview of applicability and benefits

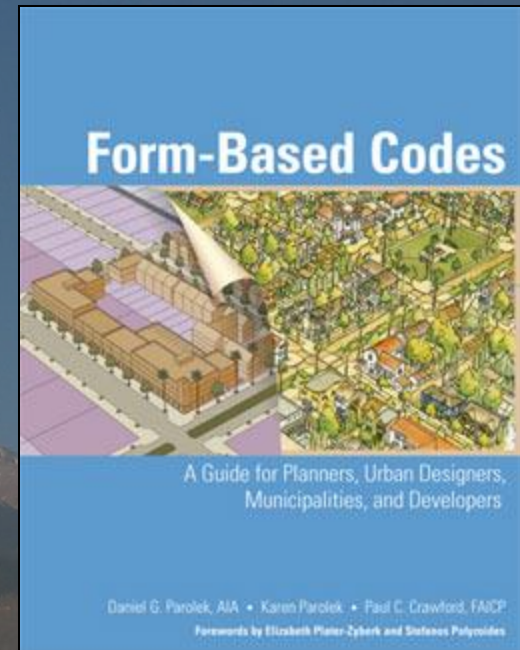
Infill Steering Committee

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What is Form-Based Code?

A method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-Based Codes create a predictable public realm primarily by controlling physical form, with a lesser focus on land use, through city or county regulations.



Form-Based Codes Institute - June, 2006

Why is Form-Based Code Better?

- Often written specifically for an urban area
- Regulates only the “right” issues:
 - Building location, massing, access, etc.
 - Regulations are focused on creating a high-quality pedestrian environment
- Uses objective standards not subjective criteria
- Balances predictability & flexibility
- Graphic heavy – easy to understand

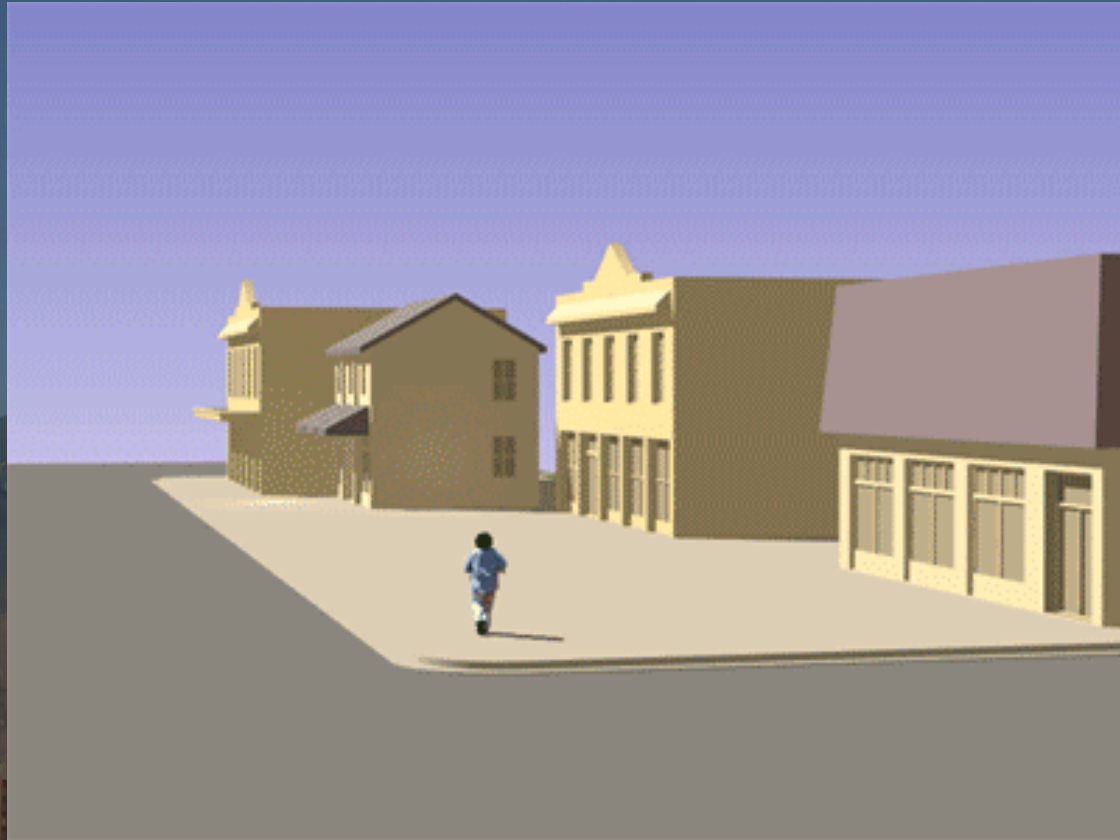


Creating Walkable Streets

Walkable commercial street:



Creating Walkable Streets



The Big Picture of FBCs

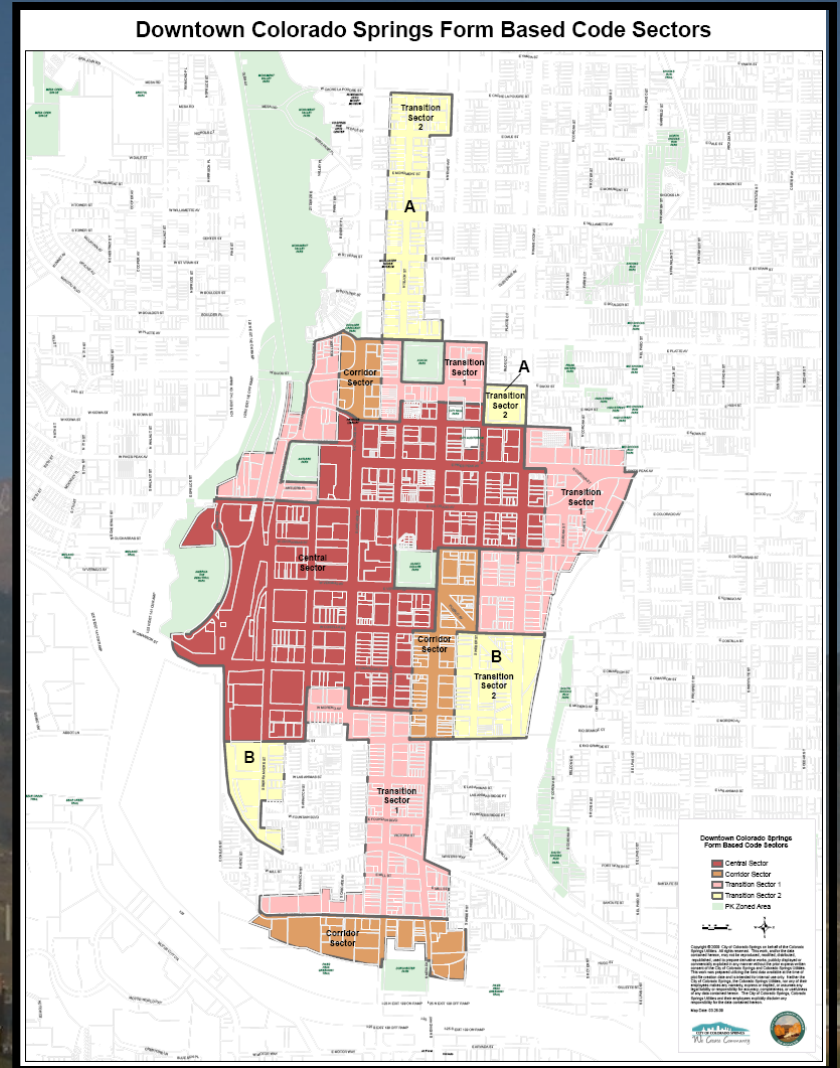
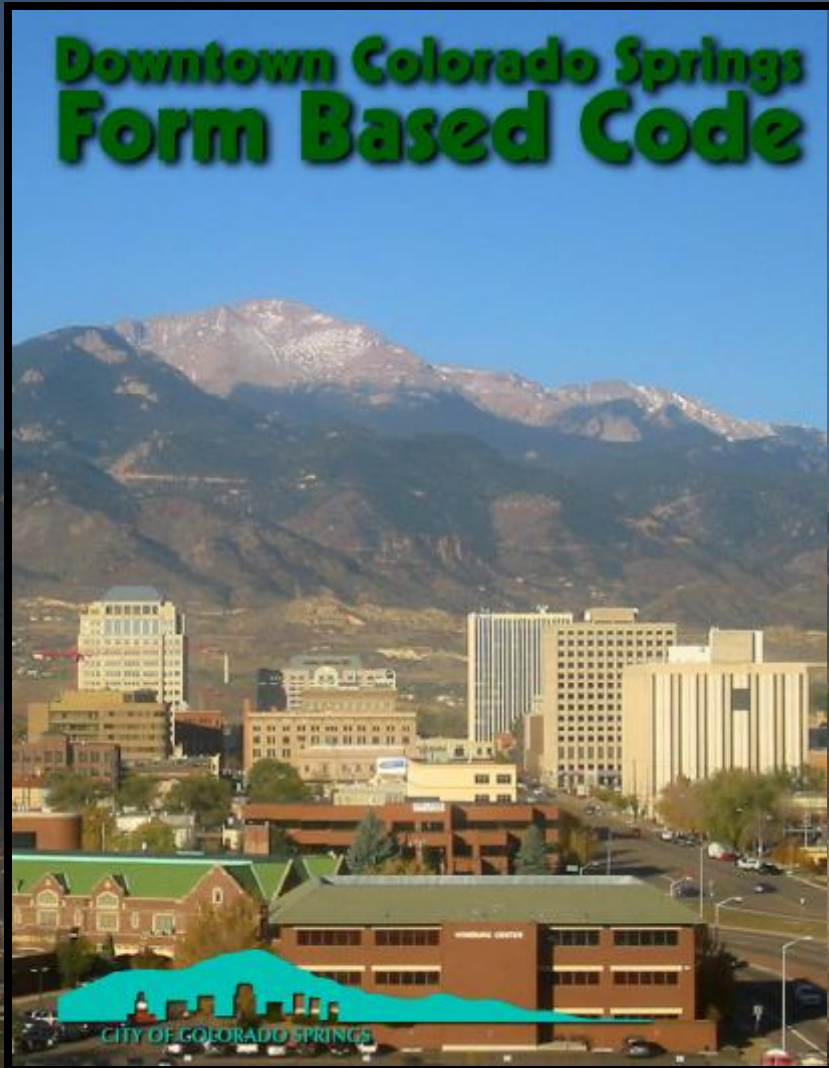
The overall goal is to implement standards that regulate physical form and increase predictability.



Communities with Form-Based Code over 250 to date

- Albuquerque, NM
- Miami, FL
- Peoria, IL
- Montgomery, AL
- Santa Ana, CA
- Chicago, IL
- Leander, TX
- Ventura, CA
- Nashville, TN
- Fort Worth, TX
- Portland, OR
- Benicia, CA
- Arlington, VA
- W. Palm Beach, FL
- Grass Valley, CA
- Iowa City, IA
- Syracuse, NY
- Denver, CO

Regulating Plan = Downtown-Specific Zoning Code



Standards

- All projects must meet required standards
- Major topics include:
 - Sectors
 - Building Types
 - Frontages
 - Uses
 - Parking
 - Block Standards
 - Public Spaces
 - Signage



Major Organizing Principle - Building Type

Seven Building Types established.

Mixed-Use Building – a multi-story structure that typically has a variety of uses. The ground floor (street level) is typically commercial.

Live/Work Building – a dwelling unit that contains, to a limited extent, a commercial component. A live/work building is a fee-simple unit on its own lot with a commercial component limited to the ground level.

Civic Building – a structure specifically designed for a civic function. Typical uses include government offices, courts, libraries, museums, and religious institutions.

Apartment Building – a structure with more than two dwelling units on one lot. The apartment building type may also be used for lodging purposes.

Small Commercial Building – a single-use, one-story structure with either commercial or office or use.

Rowhouse – a dwelling unit attached by a common wall to at least one other dwelling unit. A rowhouse is generally a fee-simple unit.

Accessory Unit – a dwelling unit that is located over a garage on the same lot as the main structure. An accessory unit may also be a single-story dwelling unit, not associated with a garage, located on the same lot as the main structure. An accessory unit may be attached or detached from the main structure and is located to the rear of the lot. An accessory unit shall have a maximum square footage equal to fifty (50) percent of the main structure's furnished space, excluding garages and basements.



Building Type

Different building types are permitted or conditional in different sectors

Sector				
Building Type	Central	Corridor	Transition 1	Transition 2
Mixed Use Building	X	X	X	X
Live/Work Building	X	X	X	X
Civic Building	X	X	X	X
Apartment Building	X	X	X	X
Small Commercial Building		C	X	X
Rowhouse	C	X	X	X
Accessory Unit		C	X	X

An "X" indicates that the building type is permitted in the sector

A "C" indicates that conditional use approval is needed

Building Envelopes

Building Type	Corner Lots	Interior Lots
Mixed Use Building		
Live/Work Building		
Civic Building		
Apartment Building		
Small Commercial Building		
Rowhouse		
Accessory Unit		

Noteworthy Issues:

- Minimum and maximum building setbacks
- Different building types have diff. standards
- Corner lots and interior lots have diff. standards

Building Height

Maximum and minimum heights established for each Sector and Building Type

2.3.4 Building Height

The maximum and minimum height of new structures varies according to building type and sector. The following table describes the maximum and minimum number of stories relative to building type and sector:

Building Type	SECTORS							
	Central		Corridor		Transition 1		Transition 2	
	max	min	max	min	max	min	max	min
Mixed Use Building	unlimited	2	10	1	6	1	4	1
Live/Work Building	4	2	4	1	6	1	4	1
Civic Building	unlimited	2	10	1	6	1	4	1
Apartment Building	unlimited	2	10	1	6	1	4	1
Small Commercial Bldg.	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rowhouse	N/A	N/A	4	1	4	1	4	1
Accessory Unit	N/A	N/A	2	1	2	1	2	1

Use Standards

- The FBC is more use-flexible
- Existing structures can be easily converted from one use to another without Planning approval
- Uses are grouped into more broad categories
- Uses are correlated to Sector and Building Type
- There are some specifically prohibited uses as well as uses that require Conditional Use permits



Public Space Standards

The form-based code clearly describes pedestrian-way requirements such as:

- Sidewalk width and materials
- Street trees
- Street furniture
- Street lights
- Bicycle parking
- Bus shelters



Section 4 – Design Guidelines

- The Code includes a series of design guidelines for more subjective issues.
- Generally are recommended, not required.
- All projects will be encouraged to comply with design guidelines.
- Those projects that need relief from Section 2 – Standards, will be judged against the design guidelines.

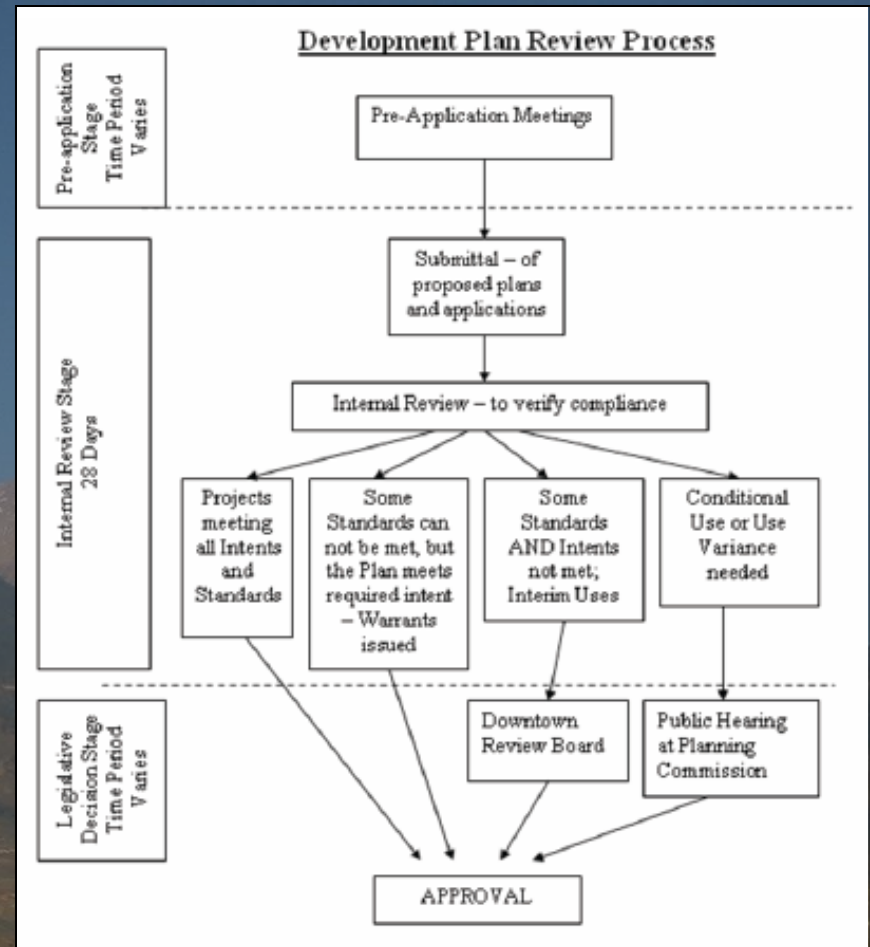
Design Guidelines, cont.

Design Guidelines cover issues such as:

- Encroachments
- Architectural detail
- Double frontage buildings
- Stepbacks
- Pedestrian access
- Parking design
- Signage
- Transitional buildings
- Services (screening)
- Drive-throughs
- Transit shelters
- Hardscapes
- Public Art

Administration

- Development Plans
- Approval authority
- Variances
- Non-conformance
- Interim Uses
- Review Period



Approval Authority

- Most projects start out administrative
 - If relief from a standard is needed, project routed to DRB
- A few uses (e.g. bars) require Conditional Use approval from the DRB
- DRB decisions appealed to City Council
- Changes to sector map or regulations require DRB recommendation and City Council approval

Downtown Review Board

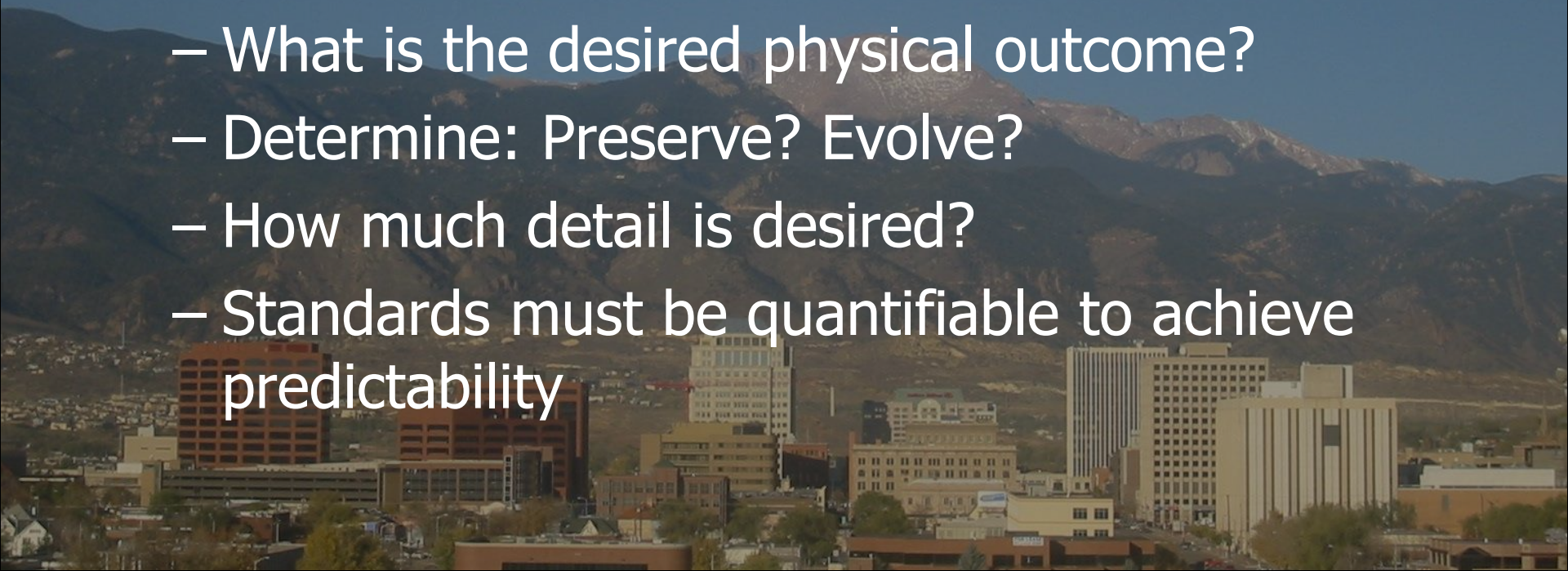
- FBZ-specific Boards common in other communities
- Provide specific urban expertise
- Made up of 9 Council appointees
 - 1 neighborhood rep (Shooks or Mill St.)
 - 1 Downtown Partnership board member
 - 1 DDA board member
 - 1 Planning Commissioner
 - 1 URA member
 - 2 FBZ property owners
 - 2 citizens at large

Future FBZs?

- Chapter 7, Article 3, Part 8 enables the creation of FBZs
- Standards and criteria established to evaluate new proposals for FBZs
- Treated as a zone change with CPC recommendation and Council approval
- Proposals could include new Review Boards, but subject to Council approval

Future FBZs?

- Master Plan necessary to establish an FBZ
- Standards are context specific
 - Calibrate existing conditions (building types, setbacks, uses, etc.)
 - What is the desired physical outcome?
 - Determine: Preserve? Evolve?
 - How much detail is desired?
 - Standards must be quantifiable to achieve predictability



Future FBZs?

- Pros:
 - Increase predictability
 - Standards crafted to drive desired outcome
 - Context specific
- Cons:
 - Significant resources to create/adopt
 - May not provide desired results
 - Implementing multiple codes simultaneously
 - Legal non-conformities
 - Enforcement/implementation
 - Market realities

Other Options

- Mixed Use (MU) Zone
 - Established in 2003
 - Major update in 2009
 - Standards, criteria in MU Zone are complex
 - No MU Zones established to date
- Traditional Neighborhood Zone (TND)
 - Allows mixed use
 - Provides standards/criteria for walk-able neighborhoods
 - Gold Hill Mesa only City TND zone

Other Options, cont.

- Planned Unit Development (PUD)
 - Established specific to site/project
 - Allows mix of uses, varied standards
 - Challenge to track 100's of PUDs
- Traditional / Standard Zones
 - Non-residential zones often permit mixed use
 - Mixed Office/Residential
 - Permitted: OR, OC, PBC, C5, C6
 - Conditional: M1, M2
 - Mixed Commercial/Residential
 - Permitted: PBC, C5, C6
 - Conditional: OC

Conclusions

- Colorado Springs' Form-Based Code was created to revitalize Downtown
- Predictability and flexibility should promote investment
- Standards written to insure new projects will be “good” projects
- Lots of stakeholder involvement/support
- Downtown FBC success doesn't necessarily translate to other areas

Conclusions, cont.

- Form-Based Codes do increase predictability but other tools already provide many FBC benefits (e.g. mixed use)
- Code updates to standard zones/criteria could increase predictability
 - Changes to criteria for infill projects
 - Changes to appeal process
- Broad use of FBCs not the preferred action

Questions?



